

# Olmstedian Principles of Design

## Scenery

Design of “*passages of scenery*” even in the small spaces and in areas intended for active use. Creation of designs that give an enhanced sense of space: indefinite boundaries, constant opening up of new views. Avoidance of hard-edge or specimen planting, creating instead designs that have either “*considerable complexity of light and shadow near the eye*” or “*obscurity of detail further away.*”

## Suitability

Creation of designs that are in keeping with the natural scenery and topography of the site: respect for, and full utilization of, the “*genius of the place.*”

## Style

Designing in specific styles, each for a particular effect. Primarily in the “*Pastoral*” style (open greensward with small bodies of water and scattered trees and groves) for a soothing, restorative atmosphere, or in the “*Picturesque*” style (profuse planting, especially with shrubs, creepers and ground cover, on steep and broken terrain), for a sense of the richness and bounteousness of nature, with chiaroscuro effects of light and shade to produce a sense of mystery.



## Subordination

Subordination of all elements, all features and objects, to the overall design and the effect it is intended to achieve. The “*Art to conceal Art.*”

## Separation

Separation of areas designed in different styles, so that an “*incongruous mixture of styles*” will not dilute the intended effect of each: separation of ways, in order to insure safety of use and reduce distractions for those using the space; separation of conflicting or incompatible uses.

## Sanitation

Provision for adequate drainage and other engineering considerations, not simply arranging of surface features. Planning or designs so that they promote both the physical and mental health of users.

## Service

Planning of designs so that they will serve a “*purpose of direct utility or service;*” that is, will meet fundamental social and psychological needs: “*So long as considerations of utility are neglected or overridden by considerations of ornament, there will be no true Art.*”